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WILDLIFE SERVICES—ARKANSAS

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Arkansas

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Arkansas Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Arkansas WS provides technical assistance in addressing concerns, conflicts, and problems caused by migratory birds. WS' professional staff strives to find and recommend solutions that meet the needs of both humans and wildlife. Each year, WS helps the agricultural industry in Arkansas avoid thousands of dollars in crop losses due to migratory bird damage.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex



wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Aquaculture—Fish-eating birds frequent aquaculture facilities to feed on commercially-produced fish. If management techniques are not implemented, losses can be devastating. Arkansas catfish farmers lose an estimated \$2.3 million to fish-eating birds annually. WS assists fish farmers in developing bird management programs and applying for depredation permits to minimize these losses.

WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research from its Starkville, MS, field station to develop methods for reducing damage caused by fish-eating birds. Currently scientists are investigating the migratory movements and feeding behavior of fish-eating birds in an effort to reduce economic losses caused by these birds.

Protecting Rice Crops—Maturing rice crops are attacked by blackbirds each year, causing Arkansas producers \$3.5 million in losses. WS assists rice producers in developing blackbird management programs designed to minimize this damage. These management programs generally incorporate the use of nonlethal harassment techniques to disperse blackbirds to more desirable locations. Through NWRC, extensive research is being conducted on this problem. Current research is focused on testing repellants and repellant formulations for rice protection.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting aquaculture facilities from bird depredation
- Protecting rice crops from feeding and roosting blackbirds
- Dispersing large urban blackbird roosts to prevent health and nuisance problems
- Assisting stakeholders in applying for depredation permits
- Reducing the impact of fish-eating birds on sport-fishery resources

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Arkansas:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing problems caused by vultures
- Managing bird predation to aquaculture in the Southeastern United States
- Managing bird damage to rice
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management

Protecting Human Health and Safety—WS provides statewide assistance with myriad migratory bird problems, including urban roosts and rookeries, nuisance goose problems, bird collisions with aircraft, and rural and urban conflicts with various species of birds.

Looking to the Future

In Arkansas, most wildlife conflicts occur when migratory birds feed on agricultural resources. As Arkansas aquaculture and rice industries grow, so will the need to protect these crops. In addition, the negative impacts of fish-eating birds (cormorants, pelicans, herons and egrets) on aquaculture are well known. Unfortunately, fish-eating bird populations continue to grow and expand. With increasing bird predation, resource managers are becoming concerned about their impact on wild fisheries. Tourism, sport fishing, and commercial fishing are directly related to fish abundance in Arkansas.



Arkansas Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

